

SPORT MATTERS IMPLEMENTATION GROUP – PLACES

Tuesday 5th March 2013 – House of Sport

DISCUSSION PAPER – PL25

Target PL25: “By 2019 to ensure that 90% of the population have quality accredited, multi-sport facilities, that have the capacity to meet demand, within 20 minutes travel time”.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Sport Matters Target PL25 aims to achieve 90% of the Northern Ireland population accessing quality accredited, multi-sport facilities by 2019. The ‘quality accredited’ element sets the context to PL25 as it precedes all other criteria outlined within the target such as multi-sport, capacity to meet demand, and 20 minutes travel time. In the case of PL25 ‘quality’ relates solely to an accreditation mark which assesses the potential quality of customer experience.
- 1.2 In order to determine the percentage of the population accessing quality accredited multi-sport facilities, within 20 minutes travel time, the Quest tool was used to determine a baseline for the target.
- 1.3 Quest is a tool for continuous improvement, designed primarily for the management of leisure facilities and leisure development. Quest defines industry standards and good practice and encourages their on-going development and delivery within a customer focused management framework. The Facility Management (FM) model of Quest is aimed at the management of any leisure facility which provides an activity for customers; public, private, trust and voluntary sector. As it stands, Quest is the only UK quality award/continuous improvement scheme specific to the leisure industry.
- 1.4 In 2007, approximately 65% of the Northern Ireland population lived within a 20 minute drive-time of a Quest accredited multi-sports facility (17 accredited sites). However, large geographic areas of Northern Ireland fell outside of the drive-time boundary and around 600,000 people remained outside of the UK Government target of 20 minutes travel time to the nearest quality multi-sports facility.

2.0 Context

- 2.1 In February 2012, Sport Northern Ireland (SNI) reviewed the target and assessed the status against the 65% baseline. It was noted that between 2007 and 2012 the percentage of the population accessing quality accredited sports facilities had reduced by 4% (and a reduction of 2 sites). The target status was assessed again by SNI in February 2013, where the percentage of the population accessing quality accredited sports facilities had reduced considerably (a reduction of a further 7 sites).
- 2.2 In summary the latest assessment shows that a much smaller percentage of the population can access a Quest accredited leisure facility, which is significantly lower than the 2007 baseline and a considerable percentage from the target of 90%.
- 2.3. The steep decline in the number of Quest accredited sites in Northern Ireland would suggest that the scheme is not having the same impact as it is in other areas of the United Kingdom. Furthermore, the decline would also suggest that some local facility providers, in particular the District Councils, do not see a long-term value in engaging in the Quest process.

2.4 SNI has briefly discussed the key issues of Quest in Northern Ireland with CLOA members (District Councils) and summarise some of the key thoughts below:

- There was a period of 12-18 months during 2010/11 when Quest collapsed due to the previous Contractor entering administration. In the interim period of appointing a new Contractor some District Councils in Northern Ireland looked towards alternative options (albeit non-specific to the leisure industry) such as Customer Service Excellence (formally Charter Mark).
- In order to access a much wider variety of service delivery knowledge and best practice, CLOA believe that Quest assessors should come from outside of Northern Ireland when assessing Northern Ireland facilities. Too often assessors tend to be local.
- Once a high scoring facility has been involved in the Quest process for 4 or more years, the costs associated with continuously improving becomes disproportionate to the value of the outcomes.
- There is a general feeling that registration/assessment fees (£2,200 for a 2 year cycle) are high and do not represent value for money against other non-leisure specific schemes.

3.0 Recommended actions for discussion

3.1 If the cost of undertaking Quest is a significant barrier to engaging in the scheme, members could discuss the potential for a Small SNI grant programme to fund assessments and mystery visits.

3.2 If CLOA are not unanimous on their view of Quest, members could discuss the potential for Right Directions (Quest Operator) to present at a forthcoming CLOA meeting and gather the thoughts of CLOA members.

3.3 To replicate what is being done in other regions of the United Kingdom, members could discuss the potential for SNI to make Quest a condition of capital awards (where appropriate).

3.4 Right Directions (Quest Operator) are keen to investigate a proposal to develop a Quest quality mark for adventure sports facilities in Northern Ireland. Members could discuss the potential for an 'interested parties' working group to meet with Right Directions.

3.5 If the leisure industry believes that Quest is unlikely to single handily provide 90% of the Northern Ireland population with quality accredited sports facilities, members could discuss the potential to include non-leisure specific accreditations such as Customer Service Excellence in the measurement tool for PL25.

3.6 Members should note that other accreditation marks such as Adventure Mark or Governing Body facility design/construction accreditations (e.g. FIFA 1 or 2 Star) should not be included in the measurement tool. In the main, these quality schemes are not orientated around customer experience.

- 3.7 Members should note that SNI, in effect, own Quest (in partnership with the other Home Country Sports Councils) and are responsible for the development of the scheme throughout the United Kingdom. If the leisure industry in Northern Ireland suggests developing an alternative quality scheme, members should note the potential challenges this could present.